

PRIMARY POINT

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In 1980, when I first came to this country, I had no temple, food or home. I was very poor. Arriving in New York City, Master Soen Sa Nim opened his Zen Center to me. He was the first Zen Master in America to help. Soen Sa Nim has said, "When you become a monk, you become a millionaire. Any temple you enter is your home—one million; any food which is needed, is given—two million; and all the clothes you will ever wear are provided—three million."

Our Sangha is a large family. Masters, when spreading the Dharma, bring this family close together. Students, when practicing Buddhism, bring the Dharma to life. When Soen Sa Nim gave me refuge in his New York City Temple, he became a living Buddha.

It is my prayer that all Buddhists will bow

IN CELEBRATION OF SOEN SA NIM'S 60TH BIRTHDAY

Selections from the tribute book compiled by Diana Clark

together in the Dharma, that we may all attain Buddha Nature, and lasting peace.

Ven. Maha Ghosananda
New England Khmer Buddhist Society

Congratulating 60th Birthday of Seung Sahn Zen Master

"Golden Staff Traverses
Endless miles of emptiness

*Harmonizing with clouds, with rain --
Nurturing true mind
Atop mountain-firm vows
The scenery is unique:
Unmeasurable prosperity, infinite life,
Deep is the ocean of merit."*

Ven. Hakaya Taizan Maizumi Roshi
Zen Center of Los Angeles

[this is a translation of the Chinese poem]

DO YOU SEE THIS?

An Appreciation of Tubby Teacher

Tubby Teacher raised his hand before the Maui Sangha. "Do you see this?" he cried out. I was astonished, and so was everybody else.

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Photo Courtesy of Lexington Zen Center

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Books Reviewed:

- Death and Dying: The Tibetan Tradition*
- How the Swans Came to the Lake, 2nd edition*
- Moon in a Dewdrop: writings of Zen Master Dogen*

THE SCENERY OF ZEN

Jakusho Kwong Roshi, Dharma successor to Suzuki Roshi's lineage and Abbot of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center in northern California, has jointly led several sitting and chanting retreats in the past several years with Zen Master Seung Sahn. In these retreats the Zen styles of the two teachers (Japanese and Korean) were blended and students of both teachers practiced together. In April 1984 Roshi and his wife Laura visited the Providence Zen Center. The following exchange occurred between the Kwongs, Zen Master Seung Sahn, and teachers and residents of PZC. Roshi was asked to talk about his life and how he started practicing and teaching Zen.

(Holding the ceremonial Zen stick above his head, Jacob brings the point of it down on the altar table with force.)

Budda saw a star, got a great enlightenment. (Hits the altar again)

Guchi's attendant saw a finger, got a great enlightenment. (Hits the altar a third time)

Today we celebrate Buddha's enlightenment, but we also celebrate Guchi's attendant's enlightenment. Which one is greater? Which one?

Hoh!

A dialogue with Jakusho Kwong, Roshi Abbot of Sonoma Mountain Zen Center

Kwong Roshi: This is actually our first time on the other end of America, and our first time here at your Zen Center in Rhode Island. Your hospitality, life, simpleness and directness is very commendable....

Reflecting back when I was three years old, I was a frail child, and when I went to just cry by myself, the Scotty dog next door would follow me and we would cry togeth-

er. (laughter) The dog knows. The dog was very kind and compassionate. He didn't tell anyone. We shared this mutual secret of truth and seemingly, weakness. I think it [one's motivation for practice] goes back further than how we began [actually] practicing, what our ideas were when we began,

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THE PILGRIMAGE TO AWAKENING

By Master Dharma Teacher Jacob Perl

The following formal Dharma speech was given at Buddha's Enlightenment Day ceremonies at the Providence Zen Center on December 6, 1986.

Today is Saturday. This is the traditional form. Everybody is familiar with it. We celebrate this experi-

ence because it's worth celebrating. Shaky-muni Buddha—Shakymuni means "the awakened one." That means, prior to his,

enlightenment experience, he was not awake, he was asleep. In the Buddhist scriptures we often read that the way we live is as if in a dream. So it is our job, according to the Buddha and the patriarchs, to awaken from this dream.

That's what happened one day to this person called Gautama Buddha. That's also what happened to Guchi's attendant. So we celebrate their experience, but of course, this experience is not just limited to Buddha or Guchi's attendant. At any moment this

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Excerpts from New Book Honoring Zen Master Seung Sahn on his 60th Birthday

In honor of Soen Sa Nim's 60th birthday, which will be celebrated August 1 at Providence Zen Center and later in the month in Korea, a tribute book has been put together by long-term student Diana Clark, co-founder of Empty Gate Zen Center. The book includes a long biographical sketch of Soen Sa Nim's life before he came to the United States (augmented by recent interviews with him), an outline of the major landmarks of his teaching here and abroad since then, and delightful contributions from many of his students, friends and other teachers, written especially for his 60th birthday.

The contributions are varied: poems, anecdotes, remembrances, drawings, often humorous and warm-hearted. Many photographs spanning Soen Sa Nim's life are included. We are printing a sampling of the contributions, with Diana's permission. The book will be available at the School Congress August 1 at Providence Zen Center. Thereafter, write to the Kwan Um Zen School.

The 60th Birthday in the Orient is very important, because it means that an entire cycle of the Chinese calendar has been lived. It is traditional that a person reaching that age is honored by the gathering of his or her whole family, by gifts, by lots of good food. It is a time of great celebration. It is also a fitting moment to review the events of the person's lifetime, to put them in some perspective, to look with wonder, to say thank you....

This book has been fascinating to watch develop. It began in a very small way, with the idea of collecting a few letters of congratulations and perhaps some anecdotal

material about our teacher, Zen Master Seung Sahn, to commemorate his 60th Birthday. The response has been heartwarming. People have come forward not only with many personal experiences of his impact on their lives, but also with new stories about Soen Sa Nim or that they have heard him tell. Others have sent poems, photos and drawings. It has grown into an amazing potpourri of many tastes, many impressions, many offerings of love and deeply felt gratitude.

Diana Clark, editor
of Soen Sa Nim's 60th
birthday tribute book

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"Tomorrow morning we will do 108 bows," he said. And they did. Fortunately I wasn't there, or probably I wouldn't be here.

Since then we have had several encounters, something like a comet rushing in from the unknown universe and engaging all the little asteroids for a few moments, and then rushing out again into the vast reaches of empty space.

Where does he come from? Where is he going? Can we catch him to make him 60?
I offer nine bows, my best effort.

"Skinny"
Robert Aitken
Koko An Zendo
Diamond Sangha, Hawaii

Soen Sa Nim's first visit to Sonoma Mountain. From the Valley of the Moon he saw three rainbows, while we on this mountain saw a double rainbow. I said to myself, "This is a very special day!" In tradition, when Buddhist teachers meet, it is quite natural to prostrate before each other in mutual recognition. After that we were both beaming with joy! Then we, spontaneously, held hands! This was the first time I had ever experienced this love with a Zen Master. We didn't stand face to face with some intense Zen gaze. In fact, we were standing side by side, not even looking at each other. This simple gesture of fingers touching, a purring, was just like time standing still.

I wanted to give him a present, something that I valued greatly, but he declined each as our eyes fingered through the many Buddhist things. Just the day before, Demian, my teenage son, had found a paper rainbow lying in a downtown parking lot. It was now lying on the livingroom floor. Soen Sa Nim said to us with a great smile, "This I can take!" We all laughed!

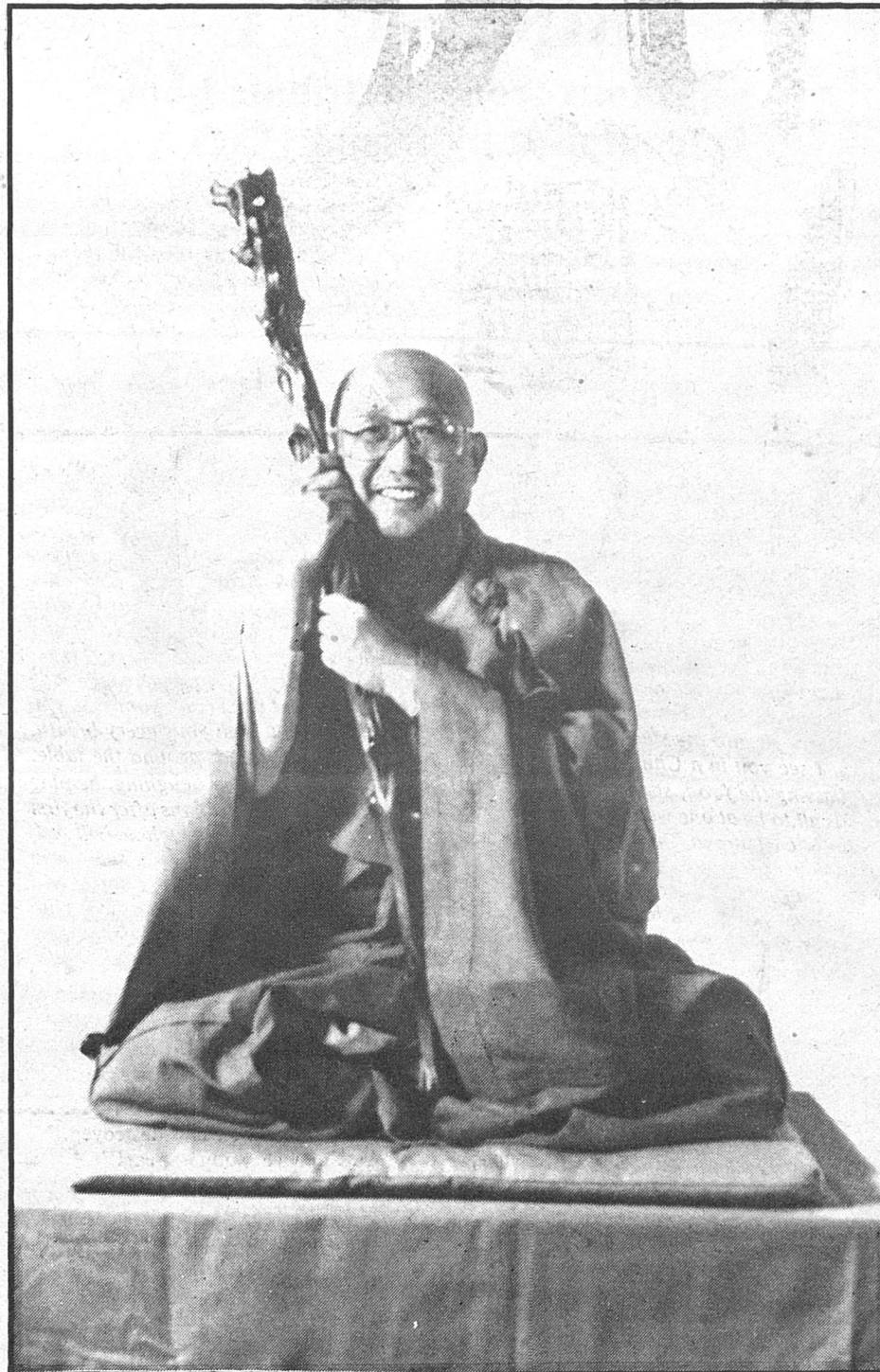
Jakusho Kwong Roshi
Sonoma Mountain Zen Center
Santa Rosa, California

Soen Sa Nim said that the true way is not to be dependent on any idea of God; it is becoming independent. Christians, he said, are too dependent on an idea of God. They only believe in God, but do not find God. How can you believe in God when you cannot even believe in yourself? First you need to believe in yourself, then you can believe in God. Then you can answer the question of who is the "I" in Christ's statement, "I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life."

He shared the kong-an he has developed about Christianity: "Christ died and rose again; so where is Christ now?"

What is most important, he said, is to make clear your direction, step by step. The first step is to attain stillness. Then you make clear your relationships, to your family, your teachers, your friends... And all of this comes together as JUST DO IT! Out of this kind of teaching can come a new reformation, based on a clear teaching of this path, beginning with stillness and moving to correct relationships.

Rusty Hicks, Christian Minister
and former Abbot of the
New Haven Zen Center



Zen Master Seung Sahn

Soen Sa Nim's first attempt at establishing an American Zen Center was in a small apartment in Providence, Rhode Island. The apartment was located on a street named Doyle Avenue. Soen Sa Nim probably didn't care about the fairly violent and unhappy mood of the street, which would at times stage drunken brawls and knife fights. What he saw was a house with two relatively large rooms and a very low rent of \$150.00 a month....

Everyone that came to the apartment in those first six months only needed to be there a half an hour before they understood his purpose and direction. Soen Sa Nim wanted to make a Zen Center out of the apartment. He wanted the altar to be the heart, the Dharma Room to be wide and clean so many people could gather and practice together and find their own hearts. He made his students feel comfortable and warm by laughing and joking with them in the kitchen. He'd suddenly decide to make a huge batch of kimchee, containing every

vegetable imaginable. Or he'd be sitting at the kitchen table for hours, diligently writing letters to unknown people in Korea and suddenly look up and ask everyone if they liked noodles. Often he'd have to look the word he was searching for up in his Korean-English dictionary, that never left his side. "NOODLES! You like noodles?" Of course everyone would smile inside and out, loving his accent and his enthusiasm and give him a big nod. Then he'd proceed to convert the entire kitchen into a flour-filled noodle factory, producing in less than an hour a soup that surpassed even his last, filled with delicious homemade noodles. And he'd be so unabashedly pleased that everyone liked it, telling them repeatedly, "In Korea, anytime this style soup. This style is Number One. Eat this, become strong -- much energy, yah? Then he'd laugh.

Master Dharma Teacher Barbara Rhodes
Providence Zen Center

Time Traveler

60 years earth-born,
The Old Man teaches whole world,
Spewing forth lies and gossip
On deaf ears.
If you want to know the true way of Buddha
And Old Man's original face,
Look to the clock.

Tick, tock.
Tick, tock.
Tick, tock.

Robert W. Genthner

a jade tree
falls a clay pot shatters empty
on the floor here the shards
of the zen master empty
as truth empty
as Soen Sa Nim

heat moves wind
moves pushes
anything a door
open a mind a
table over in its way a broken
clay pot holds no
rain the zen
master drinks
water from the bowl
before the sky
will crack

only the willow changes only
days I sit there is so
little time no. there
is no time all
of it there is only
Soen Sa Nim

where's that clay pot where's
that Soen Sa Nim?

Linda Parker
(reprinted from *Sea Birds* by
permission of the author and Fathom
Press)

I remember us wondering how Soen Sa Nim would manage to give interviews for about 140 people during one three-day YMJJ. For us it seemed particularly difficult because he was also going every day to downtown Warsaw to do shopping. So, Friday morning after bows Soen Sa Nim called me to his room and asked how many people were sitting this retreat. "One hundred forty people," was my answer. Soen Sa Nim said then, "Okay. New students come eight people at once for interview, older students come four people for interview, and you and several of the oldest students come one by one." "Yes, sir," I answered, and a thought came to my mind, "There's nothing like having been in the military—nothing is a problem!"....

We used to have in the Warsaw Zen Center a Polish van. Its quality was very poor. Its old type two-cycle engine with only 70 horsepower used tremendous amounts of gasoline and was extremely loud. In this car we went with Soen Sa Nim all around Poland. Inside we put a sleeping mattress on the floor for Soen Sa Nim to take naps on the way. Every now and then the van broke. In such cases, Soen Sa Nim used to give me a suspicious look and say, "You, Andrzej, didn't like the car, so now the car doesn't like you!"



Calligraphy by Jakusho Kwong Roshi
Abbot, Sonoma Mountain Zen Center

Another time we were going with "terrific" speed, 55 miles/hour, and the engine was moaning very loudly, causing a lot of noise inside. Soen Sa Nim shouted at the top of his voice, "Good car! Very strong engine! You can hear how loudly it works."....

There was a time when Soen Sa Nim was doing a lot of special practices and exercises. It happened that he visited Poland during that time (in spring of 1982). Nobody in Poland knew about his special practices, which he used to do mostly in the middle of the night. The Warsaw Zen Center was located then in a rented three room house. A YMJJ with 60 people sitting had just started. It was very crowded in there. Everybody slept on the floor in the Dharma Room, one of the bedrooms and the hallway. Soen Sa Nim stayed in the other bedroom. Suddenly, just after midnight, terrible roars rent the air. Clearly they were coming out of Soen Sa Nim's room. Everybody woke up and sprang to their feet in the instant. And the thought popped into our minds, "Maybe somebody is just now trying to kill Soen Sa Nim, or maybe Soen Sa Nim got poisoned by the Polish food and is dying in terrible pains." We gathered at the door of Soen Sa Nim's room and started to knock on it and ask Soen Sa Nim loudly if he needed any help. The door stood ajar and Soen Sa Nim appeared, only in his underwear, asking us why we had made so much noise, what had happened in the Zen Center—after all, a YMJJ was in progress and it should have been held in silence. Appeased by such instructions we went back to sleep in total silence, interrupted from time to time by wild cries coming out of the room which we called, next day, the "cave of the keen-eyed lion."

Do Am Sunim
Abbot, Kwan Um Zen School of Poland

We had just finished winter Kyol Che in April of 1984 and a conference of some sort was planned. Mu Ryang Sunim was arriving in Providence and I volunteered to go pick him up. For some reason Soen Sa Nim's car was the only one available, so I drove it into town, listening to the radio for the first time in three months. Then a song by Bruce Springsteen (called "Rosalita") came on the radio and I turned up the volume. Approaching an intersection just as the light turned green I drove through... and was hit and spun around, crashing backward into a fire hydrant, having been hit by a truck

When I think of you in England, a whole series of scenes comes into my mind. Our first view of you at the airport on your first visit, for instance, when we who were meeting you did not know what you looked like but saw you at once—for who could mistake that square, solid figure with its twinkling-eyed 'teaching' face, its total aura of Zen master? In the bus back from the airport you fell asleep; in the hotel, while rooms were being fixed up, you flicked through magazines. 'Is this how a Zen master behaves?' I thought, 'Surely he should be more aware?' I was to learn that that is exactly how you behave and it was I who was picking and choosing among all my ready concepts, my glib expectations of how a Zen master should be. Thank goodness you didn't fit into my stereotypes, thank goodness you were you with your every breath. I see you in a Chinese restaurant with a large group of friends around the table, passing the food, sharing the pleasure of being together, relaxing, laughing, helping us all to be at one with the occasion. And I see you answering questions after the first public lecture in England by one of your Dharma teachers—with the whole hall suddenly waking up, paying great attention to your answers, even though they were given in what was then for you a difficult language, and yet they understood and wanted more. I also see you walking through sleazy Soho and passing a strip club where a couple of touts shouted out mockingly, 'Are you a karate man?' From deep down in your diaphragm came your answer, 'Yes!' No more mocking after that!

Anne Bancroft
author of "Zen: Direct Pointing to Reality"
Dorsert, England

from the Providence Fire Department. Soen Sa Nim's car was totalled... "Clear mind, clear mind—don't know." So, after giving a report and getting a ride home with Mu Ryang Sunim in Sol Sandperl's car, we all went to sleep. The next morning Soen Sa Nim was giving mid-month interviews and I had signed up for the first one—just at the beginning of sitting. I was pretty sure that it was too early for anyone to have told him about his car... How loud would he yell at me for wrecking his car?? I went in and bowed and said, "Soen Sa Nim, last night I was driving your car and I had an accident."

"Oh? You okay?"

"Soen Sa Nim, I have a question."

"Yaa? What?"

"In the Platform Sutra it tells how Hui Neng, upon hearing a certain phrase, got enlightenment."

"Oh...which one?"

See Hoy opened the book to the page, put it on the low table in front of Soen Sa Nim and began to read out loud, underlining the words (which he had long since memorized) with his finger. "If you want to un..."

Suddenly Soen Sa Nim slammed the book shut on See Hoy's finger and said, "No more reading! Put it down!"

In a mild panic, See Hoy stuttered, "Then what can I do?" Soen Sa Nim replied, "Who are you?"

See Hoy could not answer. "WHO ARE YOU?"

"Yes sir, but the car is destroyed."

"Ah...new car soon appear!"

That was all. No problem. Then we continued with the interview.

Do Ryun Sunim
Seoul International Zen Center
Korea

Soen Sa Nim is always talking about our "Back Seat Driver." Anybody who's ever had the occasion to drive him around has a good idea of what he's talking about. He usually knows the city as well as or better than the person who's driving, and he never hesitates to give directions. "Over there. Turn, turn! Go left! No, no, this way!"

There was a long silence. Soen Sa Nim finally said, "No more reading books. Only go straight, 'What am I?'"

For one week See Hoy was in a complete daze. He would watch the busy streets outside the temple and feel like there was no meaning in anything. He decided to become Soen Sa Nim's student and practice until he understood his new question. He did not read a single Zen book for eight years. Sometimes he would peek at a newspaper and even then he would feel guilty.

In 1984 at a small ceremony at the Providence Zen Center, Mu Deung was given a stick and a kesa in the same tradition as Hui Neng, and became a teacher. To this day he reads almost nothing.

A story told about
Master Dharma Teacher Mu Deung

And, of course, "Only go straight." If you've driven with him, you understand this.

One day, I was driving him to Dr. Kang's house for a meeting with Korean professionals. Soen Sa Nim was directing me through the intricacies of the back roads along the way, when we came to an intersection. I'd been there once or twice before, but wasn't completely sure of the way, although I thought I was supposed to turn left. As soon as the light turned green, Soen Sa Nim exclaimed, "Only Go Straight!"

"But Soen Sa Nim," I said, "don't we turn left here?"

Without missing a beat, he demonstrated freedom from attachment to words. "Yah, yah, sometimes, 'Only go straight' means 'Turn left.'"

Ken Kessel
Chogye International
Zen Center of New York

For the next month, Seung Sahn Sunim stayed with us at Bok Jun Am temple. During that time, he never slept; he only practiced. He was not so happy to see the nuns sleeping so much, so at 2:00 o'clock each morning, he would hit the maktok and chant loudly in front of our door. Sometimes he would pause from his chanting and kick the door with his foot and shout, "Get up! Get up! Time to practice! Do you want to go to hell?"

Sometimes I would become angry at him because he would not allow us nuns to get our regular sleep. He would always argue back and then we would frequently quarrel over this matter. After our quarrel, he would pick up his wooden flute and play for hours and hours on end. He played the flute for as long as it took for my mind to settle down.

Over the next four years, Seung Sahn Sunim would come and go from Bok Jun Am. During that time I became closely acquainted with him. He had such a delicate, sensitive mind. I remember him strolling through the autumn leaves at Bok Jun Am temple. Suddenly he would break out into a wonderful song. His voice was rich and deep. As he sang, tears rolled down his cheeks. The song was about his lost homeland in North Korea—he could not go back. I also cried. Many times he would sing this song; each time we would both cry.

Kyung Sun Sunim
Bok Jun Am Temple
Tae Cheon City, Korea